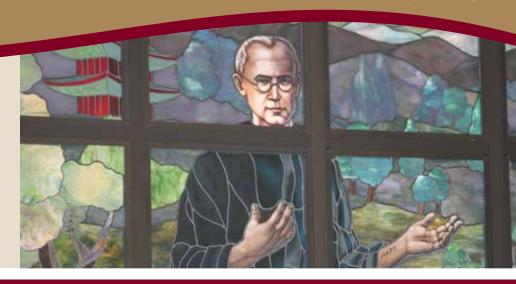
The MODERN SAINT



SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Serving at the Altar Helps Build the Foundation for a Strong Adult Faith Life

ttend any weekend Mass here at St. Maximilian Kolbe and you can easily see just how invaluable the help of our wonderful young altar servers is. Without their presence, there would be no one to assist the priest with the candles and liturgical books, no one to help receive the gifts brought to the altar, no one to carry the cross and candles in procession – the list goes on and on!

There is no doubt that the service of these young people is a great blessing to our parish. And, in turn, those who participate in this ministry often find themselves abundantly blessed in return. As Pope Francis told a crowd of over 9,000 altar servers gathered in St. Peter's Square in 2015, "It is important to realize that being close to Jesus and knowing Him in the Eucharist through your service at the altar enables you to open yourselves to others, to journey together, to set demanding goals and to find the strength to achieve them."

Vanessa Brown, who coordinates and trains the altar servers here at St. Max, has seen firsthand the ways in which her own two sons have benefited from their participation in this ministry.

"My oldest son, Ian, has definitely grown in this ministry," Vanessa affirms. "The first time he served, he was very nervous. Now I see him starting to be more comfortable with the ministry and just being up in front of people. I think he's come to know that even if he makes a little mistake, it's OK. This has definitely helped build his confidence. His brother, Alec, was also hesitant at first, but he has quickly become more at ease with it, as well."

Before serving at the altar, children attend a one-time training that lasts about an hour and a half. They meet in the church and are walked through the entire process of serving a Mass, from signing in upon arrival to leading the recessional that concludes each Mass. This training session also teaches incoming altar servers practical

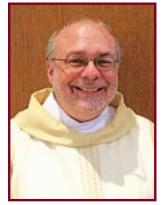


Jeff and Vanessa with (from left) Ian, Alec, Jonah, and Elise

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The Modern Saint

A Letter From Our Pastor



FATIMA: A HUNDRED

My dear brothers and sisters in our risen Lord Jesus Christ,

It has been 100 years since the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three young Portuguese shepherd children in the village of Fatima, about 75 miles north of Lisbon. The three children – Lucia Santos (later Carmelite Sr.

Lucia de Jesus dos Santos, 1907-2005) and her cousins, Jacinta Marto (1908-1919) and Francisco Marto (1910-1920) – saw apparitions of an angel prior to the visions of Our Lady. The angelic and Marian messages were the same – to pray and do penance in reparation of sins.

The first Marian apparition was May 13, 1917, this date now being the annual liturgical commemoration of Our Lady of Fatima. On that spring day a century ago, the three children saw a woman "brighter than the sun, shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal goblet filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun." The woman wore a white mantle edged with gold and held a rosary in her hand. As word began to slowly spread, the townsfolks thought it was the children's imaginations and even joked about it! But soon, thousands of people flocked to Fatima because of the reports of miracles. The three children were even detained by civil authorities in the summer of 1917 since the

phenomenon was perceived as being "politically disruptive" in conservative, early 20th century Portugal. At an apparition, the Blessed Mother spoke about a miracle to occur in October – and on Oct. 13, 1917, the final Marian apparition, it did! Some witnesses that day spoke of the sun appearing to change colors and rotate like a wheel, i.e. the "dance of the sun." Some even reported the solar phenomenon was visible up to 40 kilometers away. Some

onlookers reported other phenomena, including luminous mist and showers of flower petals, which had been reported by the children during previous apparitions.

The diocesan bishop officially recognized the apparitions in 1930. And from what was first a tiny chapel built over the spot of the apparitions, modern-day Fatima has grown into a large and popular pilgrimage site. Millions upon millions of pilgrims have visited Fatima during these past hundred years to honor our Blessed Mother and to seek her intercession.

Perhaps the most famous pilgrim to Fatima was Pope St. John Paul II himself. Having been shot and

critically wounded in an assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981, the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima, he travelled to Fatima exactly a year later in gratitude to Mary who he firmly believed helped keep him alive that fateful day. On that pastoral visit, he placed the bullet taken from his body in the crown adorning the head of the image of Our Lady of Fatima in the basilica there.

So how are we at St. Max going to commemorate the centenary of the Fatima apparitions?

First, our parish Family Life Committee is sponsoring an **Evening with Our Queen** on Friday, May 12, the vigil of the centenary of the first Fatima Marian apparition. The evening will include din-

ner and dessert, songs by and with our own children's choir, praying the rosary and May Crowning. Our recent First Communicants are invited to wear their First Communion attire and all are encouraged to wear dressy casual clothing for this special evening of celebration. This event is free, but registration is required so we can plan for food and materials. Please see the parish website to sign up.

AN ACT OF CONSECRATION TO MARY

My queen, my mother, I give
myself entirely to you,
and to show my devotion to you,
I consecrate to you this day my eyes, my ears, my mouth,
my heart, my entire being
without reserve.
Therefore, good mother, since I
am your child,
keep me and guard me as your
property and possession. Amen.

For more parish news and current events visit our website at **www.saint-max.org** or follow us on Facebook (St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church) and on Twitter @saintmaxcinci!

YEARS LATER

And second, a **pilgrimage to Fatima**. After traveling in 2016 to Poland in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of our patron saint's martyrdom, preliminary plans are being made to take another parish pilgrimage to Fatima (and perhaps Lourdes as well) in the fall of 2018. If you would be interested in possibly going on such a Marian pilgrimage, please email pilgrimage@ saint-max.org with your name so we can determine an approximate number of travelers.

As our patron saint had such great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, may we, too, turn to Mary as our mother and as the Mother of the Church, always witnessing her full and open-hearted *fiat* (Luke 1:38) in all we say, think and do to the praise and glory of God. Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us!

God bless one and all!

Fr. Geoffrey D. Drew, Pastor

Serving at the Altar continued from front cover

details, such as what to wear and how to carry themselves while serving. Vanessa also reassures the new participants that some nerves are to be expected, and that the lead acolyte is there to help them and answer any questions they may have when serving their first Masses.

As Ian and Alec become more experienced in the ministry, Vanessa has also noticed how serving at the altar has increased their faith life and brought them closer to Christ in the Eucharist.

"I see Ian understanding more of what's going on in the Mass, and I think he has a better appreciation for it," she says. "I can tell he's paying a lot more attention since he's been serving, because suddenly he can hold a conversation with me after Mass about that day's readings and homily. And I'm starting to see the same things with Alec – having him serve has given us the opportunity to discuss how it's really important to be paying attention and to better understand the more solemn and sacred parts of the Mass. It has really opened the door for more conversation with him."

Another valuable gift that comes with participation in this particular ministry is the opportunity it provides young people to develop a more personal relationship with Fr. Geoff, Fr. Ron and our deacons. By serving with them regularly, altar servers come to realize that the ordained are "regular" people that they can get to know and enjoy talking and laughing with outside of Mass.

Helping children to form these personal connections to the Church and encouraging them to practice good stewardship at an early age are wonderful ways to build a strong foundation for their adult faith life down the road. "I think it's great to get kids involved in the Church," Vanessa says. "I love seeing my daughter, Elise, up there singing with the Cherub Choir. And my 5-year-old, Jonah, watches his brothers serve and sometimes asks me when he will be able to do it. I think that when kids volunteer in this way at a young age, it becomes a real part of who they are and what they do. So, I think it's more likely that they will then continue to serve the Church into adulthood, and one day encourage their kids to do the same."

It's clear that, when it comes to serving at the altar, blessings abound. The celebrating priest receives priceless assistance during the Mass; the altar servers grow in confidence and faith; and, in many cases, entire families are drawn closer to Christ. In recognition of the many blessings this ministry brings, we thank all of our altar servers here at St. Max for their service to the Church. And we couldn't possibly say it better than Pope Francis did as he addressed the thousands of altar servers gathered in St. Peter's Square:

"Thank you for serving at the Lord's altar and for making of this service a real school of learning the faith, and charity toward your neighbor. Thank you also for having begun to respond to the Lord, like the prophet Isaiah, 'Here I am. Send me.'"

If you have any questions about altar serving here at St. Max, please contact Vanessa Brown at 513-779-1655 or servers@saint-max.org.

We Love Our Knights







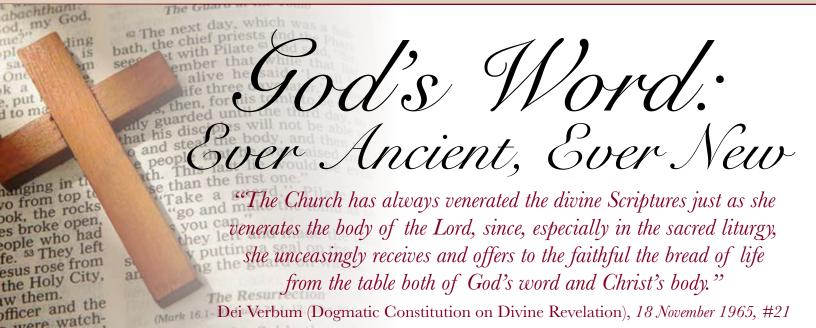












PREPARING to HEAR the EASTERTIDE GOSPELS

May 7, 2017 - Fourth Sunday of Easter - John 10:1-10

It is God – not a judge or prophet or king – who is the leader, the shepherd, of His people. Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd and focuses on the relationship between shepherd and flock. The Good Shepherd is one who comes to His sheep and is recognized by them. (*In preparation for hearing this Gospel, you may choose to read from the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 34.*)

May 14, 2017 – Fifth Sunday of Easter – John 14:1-12

Today's Gospel is part of the Last Supper discourse, Jesus preparing His disciples for His imminent death and return to the Father. Knowing their fear at this prospect, He encourages them by letting them know that in the Father's house there are many dwelling places, not only in heaven, but in relationship and in-dwelling with God.

May 21, 2017 - Sixth Sunday of Easter - John 14:15-21

The Last Supper discourse continues with Jesus informing His disciples how He will care for them after He has departed – but the disciples need to remain faithful to His commandments and His word.

Sunday, May 28, 2017 – The Ascension of the Lord – Matthew 28:16-20

This final passage of Matthew's Gospel narrates the final commissioning the risen Jesus gave to His disciples. Again, on a mountaintop hearkening back to the Sermon on the Mount heard on the Sundays of Ordinary Time this year before Lent began (Matthew chapters 5-7) Jesus is again portrayed in a "high" position of authority. The commission is characterized by an essential collaborative nature involving both the disciples and the Lord.



Check back in this section each month for encouragement and assistance for making the 1% Challenge a lived reality.

Tip of the Month

Looking up the passage and reading it in a hard-copy bible can be helpful. It provides the opportunity to look at the larger context for the passage, and allows you to underline and take notes. Want to receive the 1% Challenge daily email with suggested reading? **Text** 1percent to 42828.

More info on the 1% Challenge can be found on our website at saint-max.org/takethechallenge.

The Modern Saint

Called to Christ's Table...Sealed by the Spirit of Jesus

Sacramental Preparation Orientation Meetings
First Penance/Communion and Confirmation at St. Max

Thurs, May 4, 7-9 p.m.
Sat, May 6, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Tues, May 9, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

- Current first and seventh-grade families
- Families with older children who never celebrated these sacraments
- Others with questions and concerns about preparing for sacraments

Join our Sacramental Preparation staff for one of these **required** meetings to find out how your family can begin preparing next year with your second or eighth-grader for the Sacraments of First Penance/Communion and Confirmation.

You'll get an overview of the sacramental preparation process here at St. Max, learn how to get signed up for formation programs next year, and have an opportunity to ask questions of our ministry staff.

While normal ages for children in our parish to celebrate these sacraments are second and eighth grade respectively, younger children may be ready and older children may need to "catch up."

Take this opportunity to find out more and talk with our pastoral ministers.

These meetings will also be held in November, 2017 but families who attend in May will have first choice of formation sessions this fall and spring.

For more information, please contact Pastoral Associate for Worship and Sacraments Jeremy Helmes at jhelmes@saint-max.org or 513-777-4322, ext. 103.

ARE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW OR LOVE Married Outside the Church? YOU ARE NOT ALONE

For years, I thought I was a second-class citizen in church. I was divorced. I kept going to Mass and receiving Holy Communion because a priest had told me that being divorced didn't change my status in the Church, but that the Church considered me to still be married to my former spouse. But if I ever wanted to get remarried in the Church, I'd have to get an annulment. Or if I got remarried without an annulment, I could no longer go to Holy Communion. Wow, I really didn't even want to think of that – and I wanted to think even less about going through an annulment proceeding, churning up memories I had tried for so long and so hard to forget. And the cost – I could never afford an annulment! I had decided if I ever got married again, I would simply get married outside the church and start going to a non-Catholic church somewhere. But what was the chance of that happening - me getting married again after all these years? My children were grown and starting their own families out of town. But I can't deny I was lonely. And I often felt like a thirdwheel when I went out with friends. Some of them were divorced, too, but some were dating and a few were remarried. But then, I met a wonderful man. He was a widower. As we got to know each other, I found out he was Catholic, too! We started to date and go to Sunday Mass together. We began to fall in love – at our ages in our *mid-50s!* Our faith was important to us – so when we started to talk about engagement, we also knew that we both wanted to get married in the Catholic Church. So, I went through the annulment process - the paperwork wasn't easy, but it was not as hard as I anticipated it would be. But it turned out to be a very cleansing experience. It (the annulment) came through and we were married in the Catholic Church in front of our families and friends.

is totally free of cost! For Catholics, if you were previously married in a Catholic church, most likely your tribunal pro-

cess would be one which would take about one year for a decision to be rendered once paperwork and documents

The tribunal (Church court) process

Cometimes the issues surrounding Omarriage - where a marriage occurred, whether those getting married were baptized or not, a marriage between a man and woman of different faiths, a failed marriage, a second (or third or fourth) marriage – leave people with a feeling of non-support, non-support from family, friends, and even the Church. Perhaps you or someone you know has walked away from the Church due to one of these circumstances because there was a feeling that the Church did not care. Well, the Church does care! The Church strives to teach what Iesus did and to be as compassionate as Jesus was when confronting the difficult issues of divorce and remarriage.

For anyone married outside the Church, you are invited to contact one of our clergy to discuss your individual situation and determine how you might be married in the Church. If you would prefer to talk to someone other than our clergy, let Fr. Geoff know and he can recommend someone to you - a man or woman – outside the parish who has been trained to answer questions about these issues.

Name withheld

"I WAS NOT SILENT" Faithfully Defending Life

As Catholics, when we encounter injustice, how should we respond?

"When injustices such as this show up and are present in our lifetime, I believe that it is our duty to speak up about them and try to do what we can to alleviate the pain and issues caused by that injustice," Matt Connor says. "I hope [to look back, knowing that] I was not silent. But it's not just the words you speak – it's also your actions. In order for

fruit to come from the things we say, it also has to be something that we do."

Matt, a junior at Royalmont Academy, has been part of the St. Maximillian Kolbe Respect Life Committee for the past three years. Although he credits his initial involvement to his parents, over the past few years, his passion for the pro-life cause has truly become part of who he is. From being involved with the Respect Life Committee, to running

"Life is the first gift that God gives us. We're all called to be stewards of God's creation. And if human life is the pinnacle of creation, that should be the gift that we revere and hold closer than any other gift that God has given to us." – Matt Connor



A banner displayed outside the abortion clinic on the days it's open reminds people of the value of human life, from the very beginning.

the pro-life club when he was a student at St. Xavier High School, Matt is determined to find a way to make a difference.

"I felt there wasn't a ton that I could do to help out with this issue aside from prayer, so I sought out more concrete things to try to help," Matt says.

Due to his school schedule, Matt cannot always be involved in all of the ways that the Respect Life Committee serves, but he finds ways to be active whenever he can. From occasionally praying at the abortion clinic, to helping with placing the 3,200 wooden crosses that serve as a reminder of the number of children killed each day by abortions in the U.S., Matt is eager to contribute wherever he can. He has found that his involvement has increased both his perspective and compassion.

"The biggest way I've grown has been in having empathy for the women involved, as well as their families," Matt says. "I know that it's not, by any means, an easy decision. I would want women in unplanned pregnancies to know that there's more than one option, and we as the Respect Life Committee and the Church are there to try to help them along in their decision and we really do care about them."

Matt has also found attending the March for Life to be a powerful experience that has strengthened his conviction. This past January, he attended the march

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"I WAS NOT SILENT" continued from page 8

with 50 fellow high school students from St. Max and Royalmont Academy.

"The biggest thing that stuck out to me was just the sheer amount of people, simply because it truly does show you the sheer mass of people that truly do support and feel the same way you do," Matt says. "It really did show me that what we do makes a difference."

Matt hopes that those seeking to end abortion will also work to help meet the needs of struggling mothers in unplanned pregnancies. He's grateful for the efforts of pregnancy centers that do seek to help meet the needs of mothers who are struggling.

"If we just promote the end of abortion, then we're not fully helping the issue - in order for an evil like that to be taken away, there also has to be a mental shift involved," Matt says. "Aiming for legislation to be passed that makes abortion more difficult to access is only half of the solution. The other half is really trying to understand where people are coming from and what they're going through, and how can we help to provide other options for them?"

As a part of what some have called "the pro-life generation," Matt hopes to inspire other young people to take this issue seriously.

"I think the biggest thing that high-schoolers fall into regarding respect for life issues is that it isn't something that impacts them in the day-to-day," Matt says. "I think a lot of young people decide to not take a stance either way."

But for Matt, the increasing involvement of youth in the pro-life movement offers a great deal of hope.

"This is something that we can fight and we can end," he says. "I would encourage highschoolers to look into the issue, to look at both sides, to look at the facts of what is happening."

And it's not just down to young people - Matt hopes that all Catholics will be convicted to find one way or another to become involved in this important work.

"Life is the first gift that God gives us," he says. "We're all called to be stewards of God's creation. And if human life is the pinnacle of creation, that should be the gift that we revere and hold closer than any other gift that God has given to us."

He draws inspiration from the wide variety of people who serve in many different ways.



St. Max parishioners participate in the annual 40 Days for Life Campaign.

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"I WAS NOT SILENT"

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Each year, 3,200 white crosses are put up at the parish to remind people of how many babies lose their lives in abortions each day in the U.S. alone.

"Some work on a national basis, like leading Students for Life or a politician who's outspoken against abortion, or some dedicate rosaries and prayer, or are sidewalk counselors in front of an abortion clinic trying to help women with this very difficult decision," Matt says. "They all have an impact, and that's one of the wonderful things about the pro-life movement it's not just one thing you have to do or be good at in order to be involved and make a difference. There's a wide spectrum of things that can be done and need to be done."

If you would like more information, or to become involved with the Respect Life Committee at St. Max, please contact chairperson Mary Jo Suer at 513-378-4262 or respectlife@saint-max.org. The Respect Life Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m., usually in the youth room. They participate in the 40 Days for Life, pray outside an abortion clinic each Wednesday, and lead the rosary outside the abortion clinic on the third Saturday of each month. The Respect Life Committee is also responsible for hosting the biennial Baby Shower Drive and Baby Bottle Collection.

If you or someone you know has suffered the loss of a child through abortion, there is hope and healing. Please contact the confidential Project Rachel Help Line at 513-784-0531.



Have you moved, or do you have a new phone number or new email address?

BEYOND THE MISSION: COMPArish Small Groups

hen members of the Evangelization and Catechetics Commission got together several months ago to plan this year's parish mission, they knew they wanted to do things a bit differently. Not only did they hope to provide a lifechanging experience where parishioners could encounter Christ in a deeply personal way, but they also hoped to continue providing resources for parishioners so that their zeal for the faith could continue to deepen and flourish.

"I think a big thing that we realized is, a lot of times, people come to big events like this and they either get re-energized in the faith or become on fire for the first time," says Zack Hinger, Pastoral Associate for Evangelization and Catechesis. "Because of this, people get excited and have a strong desire to deepen their faith. But then, oftentimes, we leave them to figure out what comes next on their own - unfortunately, often causing the fire to die out. So, we really wanted to have a plan in place where they could continue growing and deepening that desire."

Mindful of this, the plan is to roll out parish small groups shortly after the parish mission, allowing parishioners to get to know one another in a more intimate setting and to grow in holiness together. Each group will be facilitated by a trained leader and will gather regularly at a parishioner's home, coffee shop or restaurant, depending on the needs of that particular group.

"They are focused on spending time with scripture and discussing how that is connected with our personal lives," Zack says. "It's not meant to be a deep scriptural study. It's more focused on taking our large parish family and breaking it down into smaller groups where authentic friendships can truly be formed, and we can facilitate that relationship with Christ."

In so doing, the small groups will build upon the core themes of the parish mission – God's love for us, the universal call to holiness, and our missions

as Catholics. Staff and planning members are excited about the new small groups, because they see it as a way to create a more close-knit community within a large parish. These small groups will allow parishioners to form Christ-centered relationships that can support them and call them deeper into their faith journeys. And in the process, parishioners become more deeply anchored to Christ and His Church.

"Oftentimes, we think of time in terms of service, but I think it is even more important that we spend time building our relationship with the Lord and others," Zack says. "I also think it helps remind people that our



Men from one of the pilot small groups share laughter and fellowship as they delve into scripture.



Rather than being a "deep" scripture study, says Pastoral Associate for Evangelization and Catechesis Zack Hinger, the purpose of the small group is to cultivate "authentic friendships" and to "facilitate" that personal relationship with Christ.

faith and our personal friendships shouldn't be separate. Oftentimes, we feel like we need to keep our faith as something we do on Sunday, but in reality, it should be something we are living all the time, and I think this kind of helps begin that process."

Though it may take some time to create sufficient amounts of small groups, we are hopeful that the majority of St. Max parishioners will join this new endeavor as they continue to grow in faith and holiness.

To learn more about the small groups or to join one, please contact Zack Hinger at either 513-777-4322, ext. 107 or zhinger@saint-max.org.



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Married Outside the Church? YOU ARE NOT ALONE

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have been submitted and once witnesses have been contacted and have responded. This type of tribunal process is also what is most likely for non-Catholics, regardless of where they were married unless their former spouse had been previously married. For Catholics, if you were free to marry and for whatever reason were married outside the Church, there may be a simpler process with only a few questions to answer, and once paperwork and documents are submitted it would take just a few weeks for the tribunal to dissolve your previous marriage.

Whatever your circumstances are, whatever the circumstances are for a relative or friend, if you have questions about marriage and divorce issues, let us know. For more information on marriage cases, you can visit www.catholiccincinnati.org – on the top bar, click on "Ministries & Offices," then click on "Tribunal," and then on the Tribunal's webpage click on "Marriage Cases" under "General Information."

And for those who are divorced, we hope you check out our Catholic Divorce Survival Guide, which meets on Wednesdays from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sat. Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sun.**: 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m. | **Mon. - Sat.**: 8:30 a.m. **Sacrament of Penance**: Saturdays after the 8:30 a.m. Mass & 3:00 - 4:00 p.m., Thursdays after the 8:30 a.m. Mass & 6:00 - 6:45 p.m.